



# OLR RESEARCH REPORT

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## QUESTIONS FOR PUBLIC UTILITIES AUTHORITY NOMINEES

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### PUBLIC UTILITIES REGULATORY AUTHORITY (PURA)

- PURA, formerly the Department of Public Utility Control (DPUC), is governed by three directors; one of the nominees is a sitting director and one is newly nominated.
- Directors are appointed by the governor with the consent of both chambers.
- The authority, part of the Department of Energy and Environmental Protection (DEEP), is responsible for regulating electric, gas, water, and telecommunications companies.

## QUESTIONS

1. What can be done to address Connecticut's electric rates, which are among the highest in the United States even though they have fallen in recent years?
2. In light of the storms last fall, how can the state ensure reliable electric service? Should the electric utilities be given more authority to trim trees, including those on private property, that may jeopardize utility lines?
3. The governor has proposed a grant program to promote micro-grids, i.e., systems with local generation that would allow electric power to be maintained for critical facilities after a major storm. How do you weigh the costs of such systems with their potential impact on reliability?
4. Should the state modify the renewable portfolio standard, which requires electric companies and competitive suppliers to get part of their power from renewable resources? Should the state establish requirements for specific types of renewable resources, such as solar?
5. Should the state actively encourage people to switch from oil to natural gas for home heating and other uses in light of historically low gas prices? Should gas ratepayer funds be used for this purpose?
6. Should residential consumers be able to choose their gas supplier in the same way as they can choose their electric supplier?
7. Should energy conservation programs operate on a “fuel-blind” basis, where all the funds that are currently used for efficiency programs are pooled and spent in a way that maximizes efficiency regardless of how a building is heated?
8. Until recently, the state was in a severe drought due to a very dry winter. To what extent is the state prepared for an extended drought, such as that seen in the Southeast? What should the state do to prepare for weather extremes, which may become more common as a result of climate change?

9. The water industry has seen steadily declining sales as a result of increased water efficiency and changes in the state's economic structure. As a result, many water companies have been unable to earn the rate of return on their investments that PURA has found to be just and reasonable. What should the legislature or PURA do under these circumstances?
10. After PA 11-80 created DEEP by merging the former DPUC and Department of Environmental Protection, a large number of DPUC staff were assigned to the energy policy unit of DEEP. Does PURA have sufficient staff at this time to properly regulate the utilities in its jurisdiction?
11. Has the transition from DPUC to PURA been smooth? Are there any outstanding problems? Are legislative changes needed?
12. PA 11-80 requires PURA to be "guided by" DEEP policy? To what extent should DEEP be able to direct PURA decisions, particularly in areas that affect utility rates?

KM:tjo